

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 CIAE-00 PM-03 INR-05 L-02 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 ISO-00 DODE-00 H-01 NSC-05 SS-15 NIC-01 /072 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6173

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION GENEVA

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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USBERLIN FOR AMBASSADOR HILLENBRAND

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GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW, UR

SUBJECT: THE SCHMIDT VISIT TO MOSCOW: LESS THAN MET
THE EYE?

REF: BONN 17186; USNATO 6147

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS REVIEWED RECENT SCHMIDT VISIT TO MOSCOW AND, DESPITE GENERALLY UPBEAT ASSESSMENTS PROVIDED BY FRG REPS AND BY THE FRG MEDIA, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE RESULTS WERE FAIRLY MEAGER AND THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS IN BONN-MOSCOW RELATIONS PERSIST. IN HIS RECENT PRESENTATION TO THE BUNDESTAG ON THE VISIT SCHMIDT HIMSELF WAS NOTICEABLY CAUTIOUS AND QUALIFIED IN HIS ASSESSMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE BEEN TALKING WITH SEVERAL OF THE SENIOR FRG FONOFF PEOPLE AND FRG JOURNALISTS WHO ACCOMPANIED CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AND FONMIN GENSCHER TO MOSCOW AT THE END OF OCTOBER. OUR INTENTION WAS TO TRY TO FIND OUT MORE PRECISELY HOW SUCCESSFUL THE VISIT ACTUALLY WAS, INASMUCH AS THE FONOFF BRIEFINGS (REFTELS) AND MEDIA COVERAGE HAVE SEEMED TO US TO STRESS THE POSITIVE WITHOUT PROVIDING MANY REAL REASONS THEREFOR.

2. WHAT WE HAVE COME UP WITH TENDS IN LARGE PART TO SUPPORT A MORE SKEPTICAL VIEW. ON SUBSTANCE, WE HAVE GAINED THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT MUCH LESS WAS ACHIEVED THAN WAS CLAIMED. BERLIN ISSUES REMAINED AT THE HEART OF MOST DIFFERENCES, AND ALTHOUGH THE SOVIETS MADE POSITIVE NOISES ABOUT SOLVING VARIOUS BERLIN-RELATED PROBLEMS, THERE WERE NO HARD AND FAST COMMITMENTS. EVEN IN THE SENSITIVE MATTER OF THE NUCLEAR PLANT TO BE BUILT AT KALININGRAD, REPORTS OF A BREAK-THROUGH IN TERMS OF ITS SUPPLYING THE FRG VIA WEST BERLIN ARE EXAGGERATED. THE SOVIETS HAVE INDICATED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PROCEED IN THIS DIRECTION BUT HAVE ALSO STRESSED THAT THEY MUST DISCUSS THE PROJECT WITH THE GDR, WHICH WISHES TO HAVE THE ENERGY SUPPLY TO THE FRG
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RUN VIA MAGDEBURG, WITH WEST BERLIN RECEIVING ITS SUPPLY VIA A BRANCH LINE FROM MAGDEBURG. GIVEN THE HISTORY OF BERLIN PROBLEMS IN FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE BERLIN AGREEMENT, WE ARE INCLINED TO QUESTION WHETHER OPTIMISTIC NOTES SOUNDED IN THE FRG BRIEFINGS ARE FULLY WARRANTED. WE CAN FORESEE FURTHER HARD BARGAINING ON BERLIN BEFORE ANYTHING CONCRETE EMERGES TO BENEFIT WEST BERLIN--AND EVEN THEN,

THE FRG WILL HAVE TO PAY.

3. OUR SOURCES WERE IMPRESSED BY THE EVIDENTLY STRONG SOVIET DESIRE TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC COOPERATION. THE AGREEMENT ON THIS TOPIC SIGNED IN MOSCOW REFLECTED IN LARGE PART SOME OF THE SOVIET PRESSURES IN THIS DIRECTION. THE SOVIETS SEEM BADLY TO WANT FRG TECHNOLOGY, CREDITS AND TRADE, AND OUR SOURCES FELT THEY (THE SOVIETS) MIGHT BE WILLING TO MAKE MINOR CONCESSIONS IN THE BERLIN CONTEXT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THEM. HOWEVER, OUR SOURCES ALSO CONCEDED THAT MUCH OF THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT IS AIMED AT POSSIBLE FUTURE PROJECTS AND WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON THE EFFORTS OF SMALLER FRG BUSINESS FIRMS. HERE, TOO, THE ROOM FOR SLIPPAGE OR EVEN NON-FULFILLMENT OF THE AGREEMENT'S EXPECTATIONS

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SEEMS TO US SIZEABLE. SCHMIDT HIMSELF WARNED OF THIS IN
REPORTING ON THE VISIT TO THE BUNDESTAG ON NOVEMBER 6.
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4. WE ARE TOLD THAT THE VISIT WAS SOMETHING OF A
SPARRING BOUT, WITH BOTH LEADERS CAREFULLY SIZING EACH
OTHER UP. SCHMIDT REPORTEDLY CAME OUT OF IT WELL
PERSONALLY, APPARENTLY IMPRESSING BREZHNEV WITH HIS
KNOWLEDGE AND DECISIVENESS AND WITH HIS SHARP AND READY
TONGUE. HE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BREZHNEV, WE UNDER-
STAND, WHEN DISCUSSING MILITARY MATTERS AND THE
BUNDESWEHR'S NON-AGGRESSIVE STANCE. GENSCHER IS SAID TO
HAVE COME OFF LESS WELL, APPEARING SOMEWHAT BUMBLING IN
COMPARISON TO SCHMIDT AND SUFFERING VISIBLY FROM
SCHMIDT'S ONE-UPSMANSHIP APPROACH. WE UNDERSTAND THAT
THE STRAIN AND DISHARMONY BETWEEN THE FRG CHANCELLOR AND
FOREIGN MINISTER WERE PAINFULLY EVIDENT IN MOSCOW, WITH
THE PROBABLE RESULT THAT THE SOVIETS SEEM LESS LIKELY
THAN EVER TO TAKE GENSCHER SERIOUSLY. THIS CONCERNS
PEOPLE IN THE FRG FOREIGN OFFICE.

5. OUR SOURCE THOUGHT THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP IS
TAKING A HARD LOOK AT THE SCHMIDT/GENSCHER GOVERNMENT
TO TRY TO ASSESS JUST HOW DURABLE IT MIGHT BE AND JUST
HOW MUCH BARGAINING SHOULD BE DONE WITH IT IN THE
PRESENT UNCERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING IN WESTERN
EUROPE. THIS DID NOT, IN HIS VIEW, MILITATE AGAINST THE
SOVIETS' TRYING TO PUSH HARD IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC
COOPERATION--WHERE THE USSR SEEMS APT TO GAIN MORE--BUT
IT DID SUGGEST THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO MAKE
EASY CONCESSIONS IN OTHER MORE PROBLEMATICAL AREAS, SUCH
AS BERLIN, CSCE OR HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS.

6. COMMENT. OUR GENERAL ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE SCHMIDT

VISIT PROBABLY WENT WELL IN THE SENSE AT LEAST THAT IT BROUGHT SCHMIDT AND BREZHNEV TOGETHER FOR AN INTENSIFIED EXCHANGE OF VIEWS FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEREBY ENABLING BOTH TO GET A REAL FEEL FOR EACH OTHER; IT REPRESENTED A CONTINUATION OF THE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS BEGUN BY BRANDT WITH BREZHNEV AND DEMONSTRATED SCHMIDT'S INTEREST IN MAINTAINING SOME OF THE MOMENTUM IN OSTPOLITIK; IT REFLECTED BOTH SIDES' DESIRE TO CONTINUE TALKING WITH EACH OTHER IN AN EFFORT TO BRING IMPROVEMENTS IN PROBLEM AREAS, ESPECIALLY BERLIN, AND TO INTENSIFY COOPERATION
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IN THE ECONOMIC AREA. BUT, THE CONCRETE RESULTS WERE FAIRLY SLIM ON THIS GO-AROUND, AND WE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE FRG-USSR RELATIONSHIP WILL CONTINUE TO BE MARKED BY UPS AND DOWNS REFLECTING NOT ONLY SUCCESSES AND STRAINS IN BILATERAL TIES BUT ALSO THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS. IN OTHER WORDS, ONE SHOULD NOT TAKE THE OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENTS TOO LITERALLY: THE BASIC PROBLEMS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND BONN PERSIST, AND THE SCHMIDT VISIT HAS NOT APPARENTLY BASICALLY AFFECTED THEM.
HILLENBRAND

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